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President Barack Obama

On January 20, 2009 Barack Obama secured his place in history when he was sworn in as the first African American president, less than fifty years after Africans Americans were finally granted full civil rights during the 1960s. Before being elected president, Barack Obama was the only African American U.S. Senator in Congress at the time.

Barack Obama is also the only president to be born outside the continental United States. Barack Obama was born in Hawaii on August 4, 1961 which is the first year that John Kennedy was president. This is interesting because John Kennedy and his brother Robert Kennedy were champions of the Civil Rights movement. John Kennedy became president when he was just forty-four years old and continues to be the youngest president ever. Barack Obama was only forty-seven years old when he was elected, making him one of the country's younger presidents.

Even though Barack Obama was born in Hawaii, his mother had originally come from Kansas. Obama told the story of his grandparents, Madelyn and Stanley Dunham, many times during the presidential campaign to show that he came from a loyal American family. During World War II his maternal grandparents were living in Kansas. His grandfather served in the army in Europe. At the same time, his maternal grandmother worked long hours in a factory assembling bomber planes for the war. Obama's grandparents were a typical American family of Irish and English heritage who had one daughter, Ann Dunham.

After World War II, the Dunham's moved to Hawaii where Ann Dunham became a student at the University of Hawaii. There she met Barack's Obama, a student from the country of Kenya in Africa who was attending the university on a scholarship. Ann Dunham and Barack Obama Sr. were married in February, 1961 and his father returned to Kenya a short while later. Barack Sr. and Ann were divorced in 1964. Barack saw his father only one more time in 1971.

Barack's mother met and married another student at the University of Hawaii, Lolo Soetoro from Indonesia. In 1967 Lolo was required to return to Indonesia and Barack moved to Indonesia with his mother and stepfather. Barack attended school in Indonesia but when he was ten years old his mother sent him to Honolulu to live with his grandparents. Barack's mother also returned to Hawaii for five years but in 1977 she moved again to Indonesia. Barack graduated from high school in Hawaii in 1979.

After graduation from high school, Barack moved to Los Angeles, California in order to attend Occidental College. After two years at the college Barack transferred to Columbia University in New York City. He received a degree in Political Science in 1983, majoring in foreign relations.

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President Barack Obama (Cont'd)

In 1985, Barack moved to Chicago and took a job as director of the Developing Communities Project in a poor neighborhood of Chicago. This group helped residents of the housing projects to improve their lives by forming tenant organizations for better housing, providing tutoring for students and also providing job training programs.

After three years as a community organizer, in 1988 Barack attended Harvard Law School and he graduated with honors with a law degree in 1991. While at Harvard Law School he was named an editor of the prestigious *Harvard Law Review*. He returned to Chicago where he joined the faculty of the University of Chicago Law School where he taught constitutional law. During this time he wrote his autobiographical book *Dreams from My Father* which was published in 1995. He was affiliated with the University of Chicago for twelve years, until 2004, while at the same time working with law firms in Chicago on civil rights cases.

In 1996 Barack ran for state senate in Illinois from the district where he had worked as an organizer, on the South Side of Chicago. He was elected in 1996 and re-elected to the position in 1998 but in 2000, Barack ran for the U.S. House of Representatives in Illinois and lost. In 2004, Barack decided to run for the U.S. Senate in Illinois and won the election by a huge margin, the largest ever in Illinois state history. Barack was only the fifth African American member of the U.S. Senate in the history of the United States. Barack resigned from the Senate on November 16, 2008 because he was elected president.

Obama received national attention and showed promise of a political career when he delivered the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. In February, 2007 Barack returned to Illinois to announce his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for the presidency. At first no one thought he had a chance to become the nominee from among the strong field of candidates in the race for the nomination. The strongest candidate was New York Senator and former First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. Clinton had been favored to win the nomination for a long time.

The primary race for the Democratic nomination narrowed to just Clinton and Obama and they battled for votes in each and every primary state, swapping the lead many times in number of delegates and total number of votes. However, Obama was able to reach the number of delegate votes to gain the nomination and Clinton asked the convention delegates to proclaim Obama the nominee for president by acclamation.

Barack Obama faced the Republican nominee for president, John McCain in the 2008 election. McCain was a long-time senator from Arizona who had been a fighter pilot and prisoner of war during the Vietnam War. Obama won 365 electoral votes, far more than McCain's 173 to become the forty-fourth President of the United States.

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President Barack Obama Questions

1. Barack Obama was born in
 - a. Hawaii
 - b. Kansas
 - c. Illinois

2. Barack Obama's father originally came from
 - a. Hawaii
 - b. Indonesia
 - c. Kenya

3. Barack Obama lived in what other country as a boy?
 - a. Hawaii
 - b. Indonesia
 - c. Kenya

4. Obama was director of the Developing Communities Project that
 - a. Helped people improve housing
 - b. Helped people train for jobs
 - c. Both a. and b. above

5. Barack Obama attended law school at
 - a. Harvard University
 - b. University of Chicago
 - c. Columbia University

6. Barack Obama was a state senator in the state of
 - a. Hawaii
 - b. Kansas
 - c. Illinois

7. Before Barack Obama, how many African Americans served as U.S Senators?
 - a. Two
 - b. Four
 - c. Five

8. Barack Obama won the 2008 presidential election over
 - a. John McCain
 - b. Bill Clinton
 - c. Hillary Clinton

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President Barack Obama Answers

Multiple Choice

1. a.
2. c.
3. b.
4. c.
5. a.
6. c.
7. b.
8. a.